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future be those which your correspondents endeavour to reform, and that should any of them attempt to sully your pages by turning into ridicule any of the works of the Almighty, you will treat their productions with that contempt which they deserve. T.

Belfast April 12, 1810.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,
I OBSERVE in your last, queries relative to alkalies, which I think (part of them at least) may be easily answered.

1st. How bleachers may know if potash and barilla ash contain fixed air. This is easily proved by dropping a little vitriol (sulphuric acid) into a solution of them in water; if it effervesces, or, in other words, makes a hissing noise, with air rising to the surface, it certainly contains fixed air; it will be necessary however to dissolve the portion of alkali to be subjected to trial in boiling water, and kept during its solution in a state of ebullition, as it would be impossible to prepare it with cold water and the surface exposed to atmospheric air, without its acquiring a considerable portion of aerial acid.

2d. How to separate fixed air from the lees of the above ashes. Lime, fresh burned, either slacked or otherwise, will, by its superior affinity to fixed air, deprive them of it; the lime will all sink to the bottom, except a small portion which will be held in solution.

3d. If the lees of said ashes are

not freed from the fixed air they contain, how far using them in that state will retard their operation in the process of bleaching linen with them. To this I cannot speak with the same certainty; but, taking it for granted, that the use of alkali in bleaching is by its dissolving the vegetable and carbonaceous matters with which the fibres of the flax are covered, and, thereby preparing them for the application of oxygen, either from the atmospheric air, or oxymuriatic acid. In this point of view, alkali containing fixed air cannot be as efficacious; it being a well known fact to farmers, that the solution of vegetable and carbonaceous matter is greatly assisted by the addition of fresh burned lime, and but very little, if it be in a mild state, or impregnated with fixed air; in this respect alkalies are analogous. Soapboilers uniformly employ lime to render their lees active, as the alkali must necessarily part with its fixed air before it can unite with the oil.

But as there is a certain portion of lime remains in solution in the lees, can that be any objection to the bleacher? I wish some of your chemical Correspondents would take the trouble of informing us what injurious effect lime used in certain portions could have in bleaching; and, what would be the best manner of applying it with a view of lessening the consumption of alkali, seeing they have one common principle viz. their promoting the solution of vegetable and carbonaceous matter.

Banks of Bann.

L.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MADAME ROLAND.

Continued from p. 201, No. XX.

“WHAT is life but an ocean, precarious as those,
Which surround this terraqueous ball?
What is man but a bark, often laden with woes;
What is death but the harbour of all?”

On our passage—to-day may be mild and serene,

And our loftiest canvass be shown,
While to-morrow fierce tempests may
blacken the scene,

And our masts by the board may be gone.”

RUSKIN.

MANON having completed her eighteenth year, took the small-pox, her parents having unfortunately

cherished prejudices against inoculation. The era left a deep impression on her mind, not from any apprehension on account of the disorder, for she had too much philosophy not to support such a trial with fortitude, but from her mother's affectionate solicitude. Neither her father nor mother had ever had the small pox, and yet neither of them would suffer a day to pass, without kissing the disfigured cheek, which Manon tried in vain to keep out of their way, lest they should take the infection. She recovered slowly after severe suffering and imminent danger. The physician finding in one of his visits, the *Récherche de la Vérité*, of Malbranche, lying on the bed of his patient, chid her for wasting her spirits at such a time in study. "Why, my good sir," replied she, "did all your patients thus amuse themselves, instead of getting angry with the disease, and the doctor, you would have much less to do." Some persons in the chamber were conversing on public affairs; all Paris was running, they said, to some new loan or edict, which had just appeared. "The French," observed the doctor, "take all upon trust." "Say rather," replied his patient, "upon appearances?" "True" said he, "the expression is just and profound." "Do not chide me for reading Malbranche," answered she eagerly, "you see that my time is not thrown away."

The health of Madame Philpon began insensibly to decline; she had a stroke of the palsy, which with affectionate fraud she represented to her daughter as a rheumatic attack. Serious and taciturn, she every day lost a portion of her vivacity, and secluded herself almost entirely from the world.

In 1775, M. Philpon and his family passed some weeks at Meudon. Madame Philpon appeared relieved by this little excursion, and resumed a portion of her accustomed activity. Her daughter on their return to town proposed a visit to the convent, where she wished to see her former companions. Her visit to the convent was short. "Why are you in such haste?" said her friend St. Agatha, "your mother will not expect you

to return home so soon." She hurried away from the convent, and found a little girl standing at the door, who exclaimed on her approach:—

"Ah! mademoiselle, your mother is very ill." Struck with terror she uttered in reply some inarticulate sounds, and rushed towards her mother's chamber. Madame Philpon's countenance brightened on seeing her daughter, while she spoke with difficulty a few half-formed words. She made an effort to raise her arms, but one only obeyed the impulse; she endeavoured again to speak; vain attempt! palsy had annihilated half her frame; laying her hand on her daughter's face, she wiped away the tears with which it was bedewed, and tried to smile. The disorder increased with rapid progress. Mademoiselle Philpon, with excessive activity, ordered every thing; and before it could be done by others, did every thing herself. At ten in the evening the extreme unction according to the forms of the Catholic church, was administered. Mademoiselle Philpon, standing with a light, which she held mechanically at the side of the bed of her dying mother, appeared as if in a stupor, a waking or terrible dream, that suspended all her faculties. Her eyes were fixed on one spot, her heart was occupied by one sentiment. At length letting the candle fall from her hand, she fell senseless on the floor. She was carried out of the room, and on her recovery with supplicating gestures implored permission to return to her mother, but the mournful silence that prevailed too well expressed that all was over. Her father at that instant entered the room, pale and speechless with sorrow; his daughter in a sort of frenzy, broke from those who withheld her, and rushed impetuously forth. It was with difficulty she could be carried away from the corpse and taken to the house of a friend. A strong constitution, and the unwearied attentions which she received from her relations, could only have preserved her from falling a victim in this first trial of sorrow.

"Thus," says Madame Roland, "was snatched from the world one of the best and most amiable women

that ever inhabited it. Nothing brilliant rendered her remarkable, but every thing tended to endear her, the moment she was known; naturally wise and good, virtue did not seem to cost her any effort, she knew how to render it mild and easy like herself. Prudent and calm, tender without passion, her pure and tranquil spirit respired gently, as flows the docile stream, that bathes with equal complacency the valley which it embellishes, and the foot of the rock by which it is restrained. The sudden loss of such a mother made me experience the excess of grief, and the most violent transports." It is charming to possess unaffected sensibility, but unfortunate to have too much.

The return to her father's house, was a new trial for the affectionate sensibility of mademoiselle Philpon. They had taken the ill-judged precaution of removing her mother's portrait, as if the place where it had hung would not more painfully recall her loss. Her studies became every day a source of consolation. "I left more than ever by myself," says she, "and often in a melancholy disposition, I felt the necessity of writing; I wished to render to myself an account of my own ideas, and to enlighten them by the intervention of my pen: when not employed in this way, I revised still more than I meditated: I pursued a chain of reasoning, and by these means bridled my imagination." Her intention was by this means to fix her opinions, and to possess a register of her sentiments and the progress of her mind.

"My happiness," says she, "was my chief concern, and I perceived that the public never intermeddled with the happiness of any one without marring it; I therefore determined not to publish any of my writings. If the public are forced to acknowledge that a woman has talents, they sift her character, her morals, her conduct, and balance the reputation of her genius by the publicity which they give to her errors.* Ah! my

God! what an injury did those people do to me, who took it upon them to withdraw the veil under which I loved to remain concealed. During twelve years of my life, I have laboured along with my husband in the same manner that I ate with him, because the one was as natural to me as the other. During his administration, if it were necessary to express great or striking truths, I employed the whole bent of my mind; that its efforts should be preferable to those of a secretary was but natural. I loved my country;* I was an enthusiast in the cause of liberty; I was unacquainted with any interests or any passions that could enter into competition with these; and my language, which was that of the heart, and of truth, ought to have been pure and pathetic."

Monsieur Philpon, for some time after the death of his wife, endeavoured to remain more at home with his daughter; but of this constraint he soon became weary. "If I wished to converse with him," said she, "we had but few ideas in common. I often sat down to picquet with him; it however contributed very little to his diversion to play with his daughter; besides he was not ignorant that I detested cards—that *soul-less occupation*—and however desirous I might be to persuade him that I took pleasure in them, and however I used to relish this manner of amusing him, he entertained no doubt, but that it was all mere complaisance on my part."

Many circumstances highly interesting and important to the formation of the mind of this truly admirable woman, this martyr to humanity and virtue, whose untimely fate can never be sufficiently lamented, are here omitted lest this biographical sketch should be extended to an unreasonable length.

In 1775, mademoiselle Philpon became acquainted with Monsieur Roland. "I found," says she, "he had

substitute fiction for facts; the more absurd, the more credible, and the more eagerly received.

* Fickle people, and frivolous as light! unworthy the sacrifices that have been made for them!

* Madame Roland might have added; and if they cannot find any real blemishes in her conduct, they are ingenious to

that kind of formality contracted by study, but his manners were easy and simple, with the politeness of a man of birth. Born in the midst of opulence, he was descended from an ancient family, whose fortunes had been melted away by prodigality. The youngest of five brothers, who had been made to enter the church, he had left his paternal mansion at the age of nineteen, to avoid taking orders, or entering into commerce, to both of which he was equally averse. He had formed a project of going to the Indies, which the state of his health had prevented. A relation, an inspector of manufactures at Rouen, proposed to him to engage in that part of the administration.

The young man complied, distinguished himself by his activity and at length became advantageously settled. Travelling and study divided his time. On his return from a journey to Italy, mademoiselle Philpon found in him a valuable friend; and considering him as the being to whom she was about to unite her destiny, became much attached to him.

The first year of their marriage was spent at Paris, whither business, with respect to the manufactures called M. Roland. After leaving Paris they spent four years at Amiens, "where" says Madame Roland, "we never quit our study but to walk in the neighbourhood of the town: I formed an herbal of the plants of Picardy, and spent my time mostly in literary occupations."

In 1784, M. and Madame Roland removed to the generality of Lyons, and settled to Villefranche in the paternal mansion of the former. "It was there," says Madame Roland, "my simple taste became conversant in all the details of rural œconomy: it was there that I employed for the relief of my neighbours some acquired knowledge: I became the physician of the village, so much the more beloved as giving succour instead of demanding retributions, while the pleasure of proving useful rendered those cares agreeable."

In 1789, Madame Roland snatched her husband from the grave, during a dangerous malady, from which her cares only could have saved him.—

She passed twelve days without sleep, and six months in all the anxiety of perilous convalescence. "Yet," says she, "I was not even indisposed, so much does the heart confer strength, and double our activity."

In 1784, they made the tour of England, and in 1787 that of Switzerland, an interesting account of which appeared in the posthumous works of Madame Roland. During these journeys she acquired some valuable friends.

The revolution ensued, that extraordinary epoch in human affairs: the friends of liberty and humanity, in the hope of beholding the regeneration of their species, and meliorating the lot of the lower and more unfortunate classes of mankind, rejoiced and triumphed. Respectable but mistaken transports! M. and Madame Roland gave, by their opinions, offence at Lyons to many individuals, who habituated to commercial calculations, could not conceive how any one could be induced through mere philosophy, to provoke and applaud changes, which could only prove useful to others.—M. Roland, elected a member of the municipality on its first formation, distinguished himself by his inflexible justice. Being deputed to the constituent assembly in behalf of the interest of Lyons, he repaired to Paris, where they passed nearly a year. It was at this period that they connected themselves with those *respectable* but unfortunate men, destined with themselves, to become the martyrs and the victims of the sacred cause of humanity and freedom.

Monsieur Philpon died during the severe winter of 1787, at sixty-three years of age, in consequence of the catarrh, with which he had been long affected.

Public affairs now absorbed their whole attention, while they resigned themselves to the passion of serving their country, and thus benefiting the human race. M. Roland had executed the office of inspector of commerce and manufactories in the *generality* of Lyons, with knowledge, activity and probity. A correspondence had also taken place about this time between him and Brissot,

whom congenial principles had mutually attracted. This correspondence, was, by the revolution, still farther encouraged. Notwithstanding his situation in life, his family, and his connections, which might be supposed to attach him to the aristocracy, Roland was, by his turn of mind and character, rendered interesting to the popular party. In 1791, he was elected deputy extraordinary to the constituent assembly to solicit assistance for the manufactures; he accordingly went to Paris with his family. Madame Roland, who had been five years absent from the place of her birth, and who had watched with a lively interest the progress of the revolution and the labours of the assembly, whose characters and talents she had anxiously studied, seized this opportunity to attend their sittings. "There," says she, "I remarked with vexation that kind of superiority on the side of the court party, which dignified habits, purity of language, and polished manners, cannot fail to give in large assemblies. But strength of reason, the courage of integrity, the lights of philosophy, the fruits of study, and the fluency of the bar, could not fail to secure the triumphs of the patriots, if they were all honest, and could but remain united."

Brissot introduced M. and Madame Roland to several of the members of the assembly, whom similitude of principles, or zeal for the public good drew together. It was then agreed that they should meet four evenings in the week at M. Roland's. By this arrangement Madame Roland became acquainted with the progress of affairs, in which, from her taste for political speculation, and for the study of mankind, she was deeply interested. "I knew," says she, "the part which became my sex, and never stepped out of it. I took no share in the debates which passed in my presence. Sitting at a table without the circle, I employed myself with my needle, or in writing letters; yet, if I dispatched ten epistles, which was sometimes the case, I lost not a syllable of what was passing, and more than once bit my lips to restrain my impatience to

speak. What struck me most, and distressed me exceedingly, was that sort of light and frivolous chit-chat, in which men of sense waste two or three hours without coming to any conclusion. Taking things in detail, you would have heard excellent principles maintained, and some good plans proposed; but on summing up the whole, there appeared to be no path marked out, no fixed result or determinate point, towards which the views of each individual should be directed. Sometimes for very vexation, I could have boxed the ears of these philosophers, whom I daily learned to esteem more for the honesty of their hearts, and the purity of their intentions. Excellent reasoners all, and all philosophers, and learned theoretical politicians; but, totally ignorant of the art of managing mankind, and consequently of swaying an assembly; their wit and learning were too generally lavished to no end." Robespierre was sometimes of these parties; persuaded, at that time, of his love for liberty, the usual penetration of Madame Roland was suspended in his favour, while she was inclined to attribute his faults to an excess of patriotism.

"He had that kind of reserve," says Madame Roland, "which I mistook for modesty. Never did the smile of confidence rest on the lips of Robespierre; while they were almost always contracted by the malignant grin of envy, striving to assume the semblance of disdain. His talents as an orator were below mediocrity; his vulgar voice, ill-chosen expressions, and faulty pronunciation rendered his discourse extremely tiresome. But he maintained principles with warmth and perseverance; and there was some courage in doing so, at a time, when the defenders of the popular cause were greatly diminished in numbers."

The mission of Roland having detained him seven months at Paris, he quitted it in the middle of September, after obtaining for Lyons every thing that it could desire. One of the last acts of the constituent assembly was the suppression of inspectors. M. and Madame Ro-

land considered whether it would be better to remain in the country, or pass the winter in Paris, where Roland might continue his literary labours, in the focus of science, amidst artists and men of letters. In the month of December they accordingly returned to Paris. About the middle of March, they were informed by one of their friends, that the court, full of perplexity and alarm, was desirous of doing some popular act, and had even an idea of appointing patriot ministers. Several persons, had turned their thoughts towards M. Roland, whose literary reputation, administrative knowledge, justice, and vigour of mind, afforded a prospect of stability. On the 23d Brissot and Dumouriez came, on the breaking up of the council, to inform Roland that he was appointed minister for the home department, and to salute him as their colleague. On their leaving the house; "there goes a man," said Madame Roland, speaking of Dumouriez, whom she had then seen for the first time,— "there goes a man of a subtle mind, and a deceitful look; against whom it will perhaps behove you to be more upon your guard than against any other man whatever." It appeared to her impossible that Roland and Dumouriez could act long in concert. "On one side," says she, "I beheld integrity and frankness personified, with rigid justice, devoid of all courtly arts, and all the dexterous manœuvres of a man of the world: on the other, I fancied I could recognise a libertine of great parts, a determined adventurer, inclined to make a jest of every thing except his own interest and fame."

Roland by his indefatigable industry, readiness in business, and methodical habits, was soon enabled to arrange in his head the various branches of his department. For the first three weeks he was enchanted with the apparently excellent disposition of the king, to whose professions he gave entire credit. "Good God," said his wife to him, "when I see you and Claviere* set out for the council, with all that delightful

confidence, it always seems to me that you are on the point of committing some egregious folly. I never could bring myself to believe in the constitutional vocation of a king, born and brought up in despotism, and accustomed to arbitrary sway. Had Lewis been sincerely the friend of a constitution that would have restrained his power, he must have been a man above the common race of mortals; and had he been such a man, he would never have suffered those events to occur that produced the revolution." The first time Roland appeared at court, the simplicity of his apparel excited the surprise and indignation of the court satellites, who deriving from *etiquette* their sole importance, believed the state depended on its preservation. "Oh dear, sir," said the master of the ceremonies, with a countenance of alarm, whispering Dumouriez, and glancing at Roland, "he has no buckles in his shoes." "Oh lord," answered Dumouriez with comic gravity, "we are all ruined and undone."

"Roland *without me*," says Madame Roland, "would not have been a worse minister; his activity, his knowledge, his probity, were all his own: but *with me* he attracted more attention; because I infused into his writings that mixture of spirit and of softness, of authoritative reason and of seducing sentiment, which are perhaps only to be found in a woman endowed with a clear head and a feeling heart. I composed with delight such pieces as I deemed likely to be useful; and felt in so doing greater pleasure than had I been known as the author. I am avaricious of happiness, and with me it consists in the good I do."

Reparations were made, by the public commotions and alarms for the dreadful tragedy of September 1792; on the first symptoms of which, Roland took every step, in his office of minister, to avert the coming storm, which the most vigilant humanity could devise. The massacres continued four whole days. "I know of nothing," says Madame Roland, "in the annals of the most barbarous nations comparable to these atrocious

M m

*One of his colleagues in office.
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acts. The health of Roland was impaired by these proceedings. He was still ignorant of a warrant having been issued against him; a secret which his wife had been careful to keep from his knowledge. Somebody, however, in the following week, informed him of the circumstance. Madame Roland prepared to go with her daughter into the country, whither she was desirous of retiring; should the enemies of her husband proceed to the last extremities, it would be easier she thought, for him to escape alone, than when embarrassed with his family. Her passports had been delayed by the section, and scarcely were they delivered to her when she was seized with an alarming illness—When she recovered sufficient strength she proposed to go out in order to show herself to the municipality; when by the sound of the alarm bell, her purpose was suspended. At half past five the same evening six armed men appeared at M. Roland's, when one of them read an order of the *Revolutionary Committee*, by virtue of which they were come to apprehend him. "I know of no laws," replied Roland, "which constitute the authority you mention, nor shall I obey the orders which it issues. If you employ force, I can only oppose to it such resistance as I am capable of making; but I shall protest against it to the last moment of my life." "I have no order," said the man, "to use violence; I shall return therefore, and communicate your answer to the council general of the commune." It immediately occurred to Madame Roland, that it might not be amiss to denounce, in the most public manner, these proceedings to the convention. She accordingly went there, but could not gain admittance, "I was," says she, "in that temper of mind which imparts eloquence; warm with indignation, superior to fear, my bosom glowing for my country, the ruin of which I foresaw; every thing dear to me was at stake; feeling strongly, expressing those feelings fluently, and too proud not to utter them with dignity.

Having, at length, after many de-

lays and difficulties reached her own house, when a man who was close behind her, and who had slipped in unperceived by the porter, begged her to conduct him to citizen Roland. "I came," said the man, "to let him know, that we are absolutely determined on confining him this very evening." "They must be sagacious if they accomplish their purpose." "I am happy to hear it, for it is an honest citizen to whom you are speaking."

"I may be asked," says she, "why, under such circumstances, I returned to the house. Nor is the question irrelevant. I have a natural aversion to every thing inconsistent with the grand, bold, and ingenious proceedings of innocence: an effort to escape from the hand of injustice would be to me more painful than any thing it could inflict. During the last three months of Roland's administration, our friends often urged us to quit the hotel, but it was always contrary to my inclinations: it was incumbent on the minister to be at his post. It was possible to reach his life when abroad, with equal advantage to the assassins, less benefit to the public, and less glory to the victim. Such reasoning will be deemed absurd by those who prefer life to all other things."

Madame Roland acted upon these principles; she refused to leave the hotel on the month of January, determined to share the fate of her husband. That fury, she also believed, glowed with her destruction, would be mitigated against Roland; who, if saved from this crisis, might yet be reserved to benefit France. Her imprisonment and trial might therefore be productive of advantage to her husband, and to her country; or, if destined to perish, it would be under circumstances in which life itself would have become a burthen. Thus magnanimously reasoned this admirable woman!

Scarcely had she seated herself at her desk to write a note, when she was disturbed by a loud knocking at the door. It was a numerous deputation of the commune to search for Roland; they withdrew much dis-

satisfied at not finding him. Overcome with fatigue Madame Roland retired to rest. She slept for about an hour, when she was awakened by a servant, and informed that some gentlemen of the section requested her to step into the adjoining room. "I understand what it means," replied she, calmly, "I will not make them wait." When she went into the next apartment; "We come, *citoyenne*," said the men, "to take you into custody, and to put seals upon your property. Here is a warrant of the revolutionary committee to commit you to the Abbaye." The warrant did not specify any motive for her arrest.

At seven o'clock in the morning she left her daughter and domestics, after exhorting them to calmness and patience. "You have people here who love you," said one of the commissioners observing the tears of her family. "I never had any about me who did not," replied she, while walking down stairs: from the bottom of which to the coach, drawn up on the opposite side of the street, stood two ranks of armed citizens. She proceeded gravely, with measured steps, while her eyes were fixed on these deluded men. The armed force followed the coach in two files, while the miserable populace, attracted by the sight, stopped to gaze as it passed. "*Away with her to the guillotine!*" exclaimed several persons. "Shall we draw up the blinds?" said one of the commissioners, civilly. "No, gentlemen; innocence, however oppressed, never puts on the guise of criminality: I fear not the eye of any one; nor will I conceal myself from any person's view." "You have more strength of mind than men; you wait patiently for justice." "Justice! were

justice done, I should not be now in your hands. But should an iniquitous procedure send me to the scaffold, I shall walk to it with the same tranquillity and firmness as I now pass to prison. My heart bleeds for my country, while I regret my mistake in supposing it qualified for freedom and happiness: but life I appreciate at its due value. I never feared any thing but guilt;—injustice and death I despise."

Having arrived at the Abbaye, that scene of massacre, her guides made her ascend a narrow stair-case—"Where is my room," said she to the wife of the keeper, a woman with an agreeable countenance—"The commissioners gave very strict orders; the keeper, an active, obliging, humane man, did not observe the orders which were given him, but treated Madame Roland with the greatest kindness and humanity. "Well then," said she, seating herself, and falling into a train of reflections, "I am in prison." The moments that followed, she declared, she would not have exchanged for those which might be esteemed the happiest of her life. She was sensible of the value of integrity and fortitude, united with an approving conscience. "I recalled the past to my mind," says she, "I calculated the event of the future. I devoted myself, if I may say, voluntarily to my destiny, whatever it might be: I defied its rigour, and fixed myself firmly in that state of mind, in which, without giving ourselves concern for what is to come, we seek only employment for the present." But this tranquillity in regard to her own fate extended not to that of her country and her friends.

To be Continued.

FOREIGN LITERATURE.

Report of the Proceedings of the Class of History and Ancient Literature, of the French Institute, delivered at the public meeting on the 7th of July, 1809, by M. Ginguené.

M. GOSSELIN has inquired into the geographical knowledge the ancients had of the coasts of India.

He conceives, that Herodotus was misled by the Persians, who were desirous of persuading him, that they had penetrated much further into India than they had done in reality under Darius, the son of Hytaspes.—Every thing in the description of India, given by that historian, relates